

MAY 2023 ISSUE

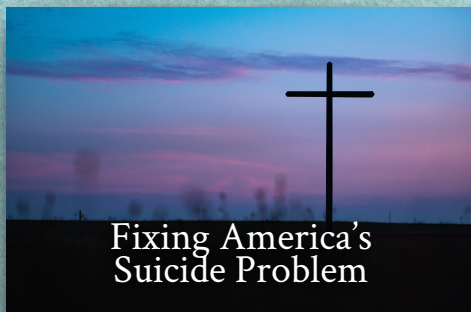
EMPTY TOMB PROJECT

THE MAGAZINE

*The Questions the
Pope Must Answer*
Answering a Broken Culture



Hug Your Mother



Fixing America's
Suicide Problem



Blessed Are You

Empty Tomb Institute

Into the DEEP

MAKE SUMMER
A TIME
FOR FAITH

INDIVIDUAL COMMITTMENT:

- 10-15 Minutes of Private Daily Prayer.
- A Different Prayer Focus Provided via Email for Each Week.
- Prayer and Social Gatherings Offered with the Rest of the Group.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SIGN UP:

Email Tom Griffin

EmptyTombProject@gmail.com

ETP: The Magazine

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What is The Empty Tomb Project?

Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine is a non-profit that exists to bring the reality and power of the empty tomb to as many people as possible. We are convinced that if men and women encounter Jesus as a real living person their lives will be radically changed.

We are a Catholic media company that desires to bring relevant cultural and spiritual topics to our readers in an honest and fresh manner. We dive into topics that truly matter to people, themes that are brought up in people's homes as well as in church circles. We desire to bring uniformity in message and an increase in inspiration to Catholics across Long Island (and beyond).

Along with providing the most dynamic content we are committed to producing a product that is beautifully captivating to the eye. To do so we will always rely on the best Catholic designers (StartUpCatholic) so that the content can be amplified by the aesthetics of the magazine.

In order to reach as many people as possible with the critically important message of Christ we rely on donors in order to grow the mission and impact of our magazine. This will allow us to remain free and ensure that anyone who desires to meet Jesus today will have that opportunity. If you feel called to support us, please reach out via email: EmptyTombProject@gmail.com and join us in the mission! All donations are tax deductible.

MAJOR HEADLINE: The Questions the Pope Must Answer

By Thomas Griffin

A new documentary featuring Pope Francis was released by the Disney-owned Hulu streaming platform recently. *The Pope: Answers* highlights the questions from 10 young people from around the world. Whether they are from Senegal, Boston or Spain all of these young individuals speak Spanish with the Roman Pontiff and it is truly an organic conversation showing that the pope is not easily definable.

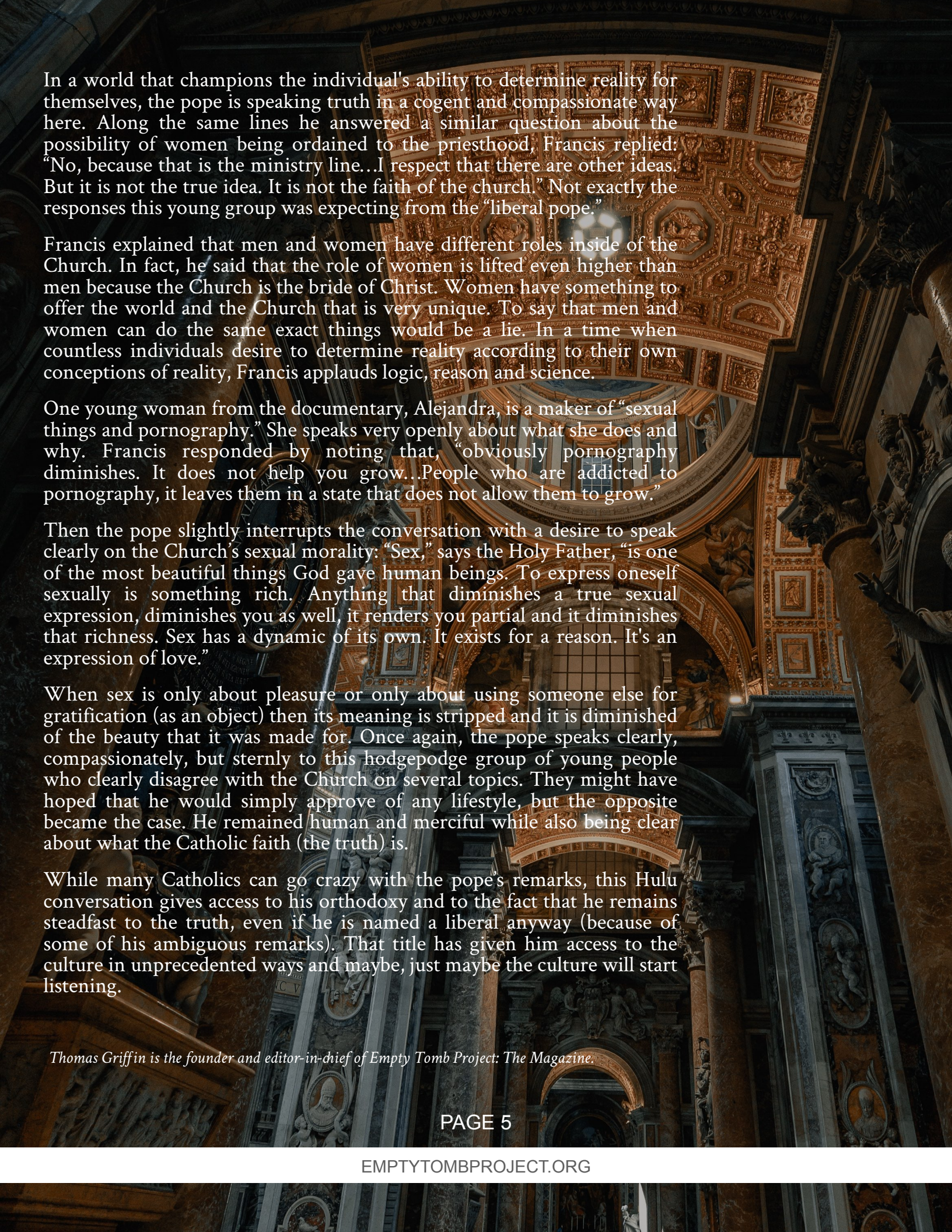
The nearly hour and a half documentary clip begins showing various members of the conversation preparing for their travel to Rome for the interview, hinting at many of their backgrounds and beliefs. The group first meets each other (without the pope present) and speaks about what it will be like to meet the leader of the Catholic world. Some were nervous for the conversation, but all were optimistic about the personal fruits that could come from the interview.

“I feel ready for it because I know the pope is more liberal,” one of them remarks. They appear open to what the pope will have to say, but honest about the fact that they think the Church needs to change. Pope Francis has indeed become known for his off the cuff remarks and their consistent ambiguities. While there are a few lines that fall in that camp from his Hulu interview, the pope appears very serious during the tough (accusatory) questions and he upholds the Church’s teachings in the face of adversity. Let’s take a look at some of his responses to the topics concerned with human sexuality.

“Why does the Church stand between women and the right to choose?” one girl asked the pope. “Jesus would walk with that person” she exclaimed. She calls herself a Catholic but a staunch feminist as well. Francis responds by saying that the real question we must ask about abortion is whether or not it is “valid to eliminate a life to solve a problem? Can we simply pay someone to eliminate a problem?”

“We must call a spade a spade. Staying by her side is one thing. But justifying the act is another,” says the Bishop of Rome. Francis included the scientific fact that at a month following conception the human DNA is organized and all organs are present. He urges that we need to follow the cold science on this topic while always showing mercy to women who have chosen an abortion. In the face of a generation that desires everything to be permitted, the pope stood by the unchanging truth that murdering babies is evil.

“Would it be better if I was not a feminist Christian but just a feminist?” asked the same girl who champions a woman’s right to choose. “Feminist is an adjective. I am interested in nouns,” the pope said. “We have fallen into an adjective culture. We pile up adjectives. We do not baptize adjectives. We baptize nouns, people. I believe in people,” he said.



In a world that champions the individual's ability to determine reality for themselves, the pope is speaking truth in a cogent and compassionate way here. Along the same lines he answered a similar question about the possibility of women being ordained to the priesthood, Francis replied: "No, because that is the ministry line...I respect that there are other ideas. But it is not the true idea. It is not the faith of the church." Not exactly the responses this young group was expecting from the "liberal pope."

Francis explained that men and women have different roles inside of the Church. In fact, he said that the role of women is lifted even higher than men because the Church is the bride of Christ. Women have something to offer the world and the Church that is very unique. To say that men and women can do the same exact things would be a lie. In a time when countless individuals desire to determine reality according to their own conceptions of reality, Francis applauds logic, reason and science.

One young woman from the documentary, Alejandra, is a maker of "sexual things and pornography." She speaks very openly about what she does and why. Francis responded by noting that, "obviously pornography diminishes. It does not help you grow...People who are addicted to pornography, it leaves them in a state that does not allow them to grow."

Then the pope slightly interrupts the conversation with a desire to speak clearly on the Church's sexual morality: "Sex," says the Holy Father, "is one of the most beautiful things God gave human beings. To express oneself sexually is something rich. Anything that diminishes a true sexual expression, diminishes you as well, it renders you partial and it diminishes that richness. Sex has a dynamic of its own. It exists for a reason. It's an expression of love."

When sex is only about pleasure or only about using someone else for gratification (as an object) then its meaning is stripped and it is diminished of the beauty that it was made for. Once again, the pope speaks clearly, compassionately, but sternly to this hodgepodge group of young people who clearly disagree with the Church on several topics. They might have hoped that he would simply approve of any lifestyle, but the opposite became the case. He remained human and merciful while also being clear about what the Catholic faith (the truth) is.

While many Catholics can go crazy with the pope's remarks, this Hulu conversation gives access to his orthodoxy and to the fact that he remains steadfast to the truth, even if he is named a liberal anyway (because of some of his ambiguous remarks). That title has given him access to the culture in unprecedented ways and maybe, just maybe the culture will start listening.

Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine.



Blessed Are You Among Women

By Theresa Marino

During the month of May, Catholic Churches everywhere will sing Marian hymns, adorn sanctuaries with blue linens and weave crowns of white roses in the Blessed Mother's honor. Every little church girl is taught about Mary's special role in salvation history as God's mother and learns to pray to this patron who is "full of grace" before they know most anything else about being Catholic.

But when those little church girls grow up and their bodies change, they face the insecurities and challenges of womanhood and the hardships of modernity, it can hit like a ton of bricks that they are so very far from that ideal woman they so admire. How can we relate to Mary without being overwhelmed by the simultaneous bigness (Mary Queen of the Universe!) and littleness (poor teenage handmaiden) of who she is? If we're being honest, there is some hardcore cognitive dissonance that settles into the gap between the notion of who Mary is, and who we are in light of her specialness.

How are we to relate with the perfect woman, as imperfect women? How are we to confide in a friend who didn't have original sin, when we feel the effects of it multiple times a day? How can we be our true selves before a mother completely full of grace, when we often feel completely full of...well, something else entirely?

One suggestion is to look up Mary's titles and pray about which one is relatable to you on any given day. A simple Google search brings us to an extensive list of the names associated with Our Lady ranging from Queen of Heaven and Earth to Mother of Good Counsel. Upon meditation, one finds that there are tiers, so to speak, that those titles can be divided into.

Namely, (1) the lofty titles (relating to Heavenly bodies, crowns of gold, or perfected virtues), (2) the down-to-earth titles (relating to the female experience of being a mother, wife and member of society) and (3) the intercessory titles (relating to how Mary is called upon for help by her spiritual children in times of need). Some examples are listed below, but you can do your own investigative research to see which of Mary's titles hits the bullseye of your heart on this particular day of your life.

Lofty Titles (for when you need a hero):

Queen of All Saints, Woman of the Apocalypse, Co-Redemptrix

Down-To-Earth Titles (for when you need a sister):

New Eve, Our Lady of Charity, Our Lady of Families, Our Lady of Good Voyage

Intercessory Titles (for when you need a mom):

Joy of All Who Sorrow, Mother of Peace, Help of Christians

It is worth considering that Our Lady has appeared many times, to many people, all around the world. Each time, wearing something specific to that culture, speaking to the events of that age in history, and in the native tongue of the visionaries themselves. Mary is all things to all people, and offers her presence and her intercessory graces to us in any shape or form that will be beneficial to us at our given states in life. Like any good mother, Our Lady condescends to the level of her children to answer their questions and make her warmth closely felt in times of need or fear.

She has given us physical devotionals such as the Holy Rosary, the Miraculous Medal and the Brown Scapular to help us materialize her presence in a tactile way. And she intercedes for us constantly at the throne of her Son who, as many saints say, cannot deny her a single request. She, indeed, is both the biggest and the smallest female figure in history - which should be of some comfort to us women who often shift into and out of the spotlight of our own lives as called upon.

Women of faith - take some time to pray with Mary's titles this May. Ask her to reveal herself as a queen, wife, mother, star or servant to you, depending on the place in your heart which most needs her friendship at the moment. You may be surprised just which of your prayers are answered, or virtues called forth, in Mary's good company.

Theresa Marino is a New York native who has served the Catholic Church throughout her twenties in various ministry capacities. Currently a middle school Religion Teacher, she has also worked in high school campus ministry, music ministry, mission work and parish settings.



Hug Your Mother

By Sarah Griffin

“Indeed all the hairs on your head are numbered.” (Luke 12:7)

At 20 weeks gestation, the halfway point of pregnancy, your own mother's reproductive system was fully formed within your grandmother's uterus. This means that your mom had somewhere between 6 and 7 million (immature) eggs, a number that only decreased from there: at the time of her birth, she was down to between 1 and 2 million, and at the time of puberty, down to between 300,000 to 400,000 eggs with a loss of approximately 1,000 eggs each month. No new eggs were formed or created after 20 weeks.

The odds of you being born were one in several million, and when you multiply those odds by the uniqueness of your genetic code, you have arrived at a near impossibility. Your existence is nearly impossible, and actually unrepeatable. And yet, here you are. Whether you were your mother's first child, last child, or only child; whether your mother prayed fervently for you to be conceived, or just the opposite; whether you were loved by your biological mother, or another mother - God wanted you here. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding your own birth, you were born on purpose, and with a purpose. Before, during, and after you were born, God called you by name.

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:14)

My first pregnancy was a very difficult one. For me, the 20 week milestone was met with a rare fetal diagnosis - doctors were not able to predict if my child would make it through the pregnancy nor what quality of life would be like if birth was achieved. Both prayer and tears flowed constantly - I used to sit in the Nursery reading a baby book called *On the Night You Were Born* by Nancy Tillman, and just cry my eyes out. The book reads,

*On the night you were born,
The moon smiled with such wonder
That the stars peeked in to see you
And the night wind whispered,
“Life will never be the same.”
Because there had never been anyone like you...
Ever in the world.*

I knew this pregnancy, the joy of the child growing inside me and the suffering of not knowing the outcome, was part of God's plan - my mom taught me that. This life would never be the same because I was already changed. I knew the love I had for this child, what she had already taught me, and the love I had for my husband and how his support was God's hand.

“For I know the plans I have for you.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

It wasn't until I actually gave birth to my first daughter and looked into her little face that I fully understood my own mother's love for me. It was almost as if my own life flashed before my eyes as I welcomed this new one. Pregnancy and childbearing unlocked a level of understanding the unconditional love between mother and child that I didn't know I was missing. Looking into my daughter's face - instantly and fiercely loving her - and simultaneously understanding the depths of my own mother's love for me was like looking into the face of God. This experience has allowed me to fully contemplate His greatness and incredible love for all of us. Today, and every day really, if at all possible, hug your mother. Look upon the face of God in the love you share. In the statistically impossible existence of your life, view the one person who helped you get here.

Sarah Griffin is a wife and mother of two girls who lives on Long Island. She is a former Catholic school principal and teacher who remains involved in the strengthening of Catholic education.

Current Events: Fixing America's Suicide Problem

By Thomas Griffin

This April, the [Pew Charitable Trusts](#), released a video that highlights some of the reasons for the skyrocketing rates of suicide in America today. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention there are, on average, 130 suicides per day in the United States. Over 45,000 Americans die of suicide each year and there are over one million suicide attempts every year.

Among the largest reasons include feelings of hopelessness and isolation. Even though we are out of the shutdowns of the pandemic, feelings of loneliness are prominent in the human condition - they always have been. Contemporary men and women attempt to heal these feelings through an increase in screen time or numb them through alcohol, drugs, or ignoring their feelings altogether. The answer, however, is found in a reality that is being left behind. The antidote is a life of faith.

Stanford University anthropologist, Tanya Luhrmann, wrote a book about how faith makes us healthier - physically, emotionally and psychologically. [How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others](#). In an review of her work, an article in Stanford news noted:

“Research has repeatedly shown that people of faith report feeling better and healthier. One of the most striking findings in social epidemiology, Luhrmann notes, is that religious involvement with God is better for your body in terms of immune functions and reducing loneliness. One explanation for this, Luhrmann writes, is that for those with an intense faith, God becomes a social relationship. MRI results indicate that in terms of brain function, talking to God resembles conversing with a friend.”

When all else is lost in someone's life they often do not need medication or expensive therapy. What they need is faith. They need to know that they are loved infinitely by the God of the universe and that they exist to be in a relationship with Him. It is this relationship that has the greatest capacity to convey the fact that we are made out of love and for love. The Latin word *religare*, where we receive our word “religion” literally means “a binding relationship.” research has shown that making this relationship central to your life leads to greater feelings of fulfillment and happiness.

Do you ever feel lonely? Every single person on the face of the earth would have to respond affirmatively if they were honest. Have you ever truly considered whether or not your life has value or if it is worth going on? Many, many Americans would also say, yes. According to [Lifeway Research](#), 63% of Americans wonder if their life can have more meaning on a regular basis.

The antidote is that we need each other, and that we need God. We need meaningful relationships. The science of the brain literally confirms what thousands of years of the Bible has accounted for: the more we run away from God the more likely we are to question our worth. Statistically, America has never been less faithful and Americans have never been more suicidal. This is no coincidence.

Human beings are made for relationships, and when we neglect our relationship with God and our most important relationships (spouses and children) everything else falls apart. The Catholic Church has a place to lead in this arena and it should do so by empowering lay Catholics to enter their families and places of work on fire with the Presence and Truth of Christ. That is how we inspire others to see that life is worth living and is worth living with purpose.

There is nothing more life altering than choosing to take one's own life. It is when we are experiencing feelings of deep loneliness or depression that we must never make such decisions. Similar to driving through a great storm, sometimes the windshield wipers can never go fast enough for us to see clearly. We must wait out the storm and cling to others. Catholics must be the refuge our world needs to wait out the storm.

As the rates of religious observance and importance continue to plummet, we will continue to see soaring rates of suicide and depression. In order to spin these in the right direction, and save lives, we must return to faith and know that a relationship with God is the number one leading cause to a life filled with the deep confidence that we are never alone.

Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine.





By Marc Piperno

Inspired by their beloved Grandpa Nunzi, keeping the traditions of the good ole days alive has become the center of owner Michael Napolitano's vision. To sit at the dinner table to talk and laugh with friends and family, while enjoying an elevated take on old world Italian cooking. Nunzis invites you to come and experience the "New" Good Ole Days and create more memorable moments for the people in your life that you care about.

Opening last October, Nunzis is quickly becoming the hottest new restaurant in Farmingdale. With the help of Michael's father Vincent and brother Vincent Jr., they have all worked tirelessly to demonstrate that the incredible dishes made in the kitchen are only rivaled by the fantastic hospitality of Nunzis, where everybody is treated like a VIP. Traditions and respect for the good ole days, have all been incorporated into a sleek and modern layout by renowned designer Derek Axelrod.

"In keeping our grandfather's traditions alive, you will eat with us, drink with us and laugh with us. Families and friends will all enjoy delicious food, fine drinks, good music and making memories," states Napolitano. The modern take on classic dishes, highlights a menu

that incorporates unique twists on old school Italian meals. With superb creations such as Grandmas Meatballs, Pappardelle & Lamb, Heritage Pork Chop, and desserts like Cannoli Cream with Biscotti.

Not to be missed are fascinating interpretations that will satisfy the cravings of adventurous foodies such as one-of-a-kind Limoncello Chicken Wings and a boisterous menu placement of a Philly Cheesesteak Sandwich. What Chefs Anthony LoCastro and Marc Wisehart have collaborated to produce, are memorable moments on a plate.

Nunzis is considered, by its loyalists as an immersive cultural experience that warmly embraces. The moment guests walk in the door they are dazzled by a lively environment that is both edgy and delightful. Both Axelrod and the Napolitano's worked harmoniously to launch what has now become a distinct trademark at Nunzis. Michael Napolitano seeks to enchant young and old alike by capturing a fresh, contemporary, and sleek look, with nods to the glamour and romance of classic Italian meals.

For more information, please visit nunzis1274.com, and on Instagram at [@nunzisingdale](https://www.instagram.com/nunzisingdale).

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TAKEAWAYS:

1. The Pope responds to young people's questions with Truth.
2. We need the titles of Mary to help us.
3. You did not have to be here, so thank your mother.
4. Understanding faith as a relationship can save your life.

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